

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

021721Z Jul 04

USINT HAVANA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 002153

SIPDIS

NSC FOR CBARTON  
USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD  
STATE PASS USAID FOR DCHA/OTI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/02/2014  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [VE](#) [CONS](#)  
SUBJECT: CHAVEZ PADS VOTES WITH NATURALIZATION AND IDENTITY CARDS

REF: CARACAS 2081

CLASSIFIED BY: MARK A. WELLS, ACTING POLITICAL COUNSELOR,  
FOR REASONS 1.4(B) AND (D).

-----  
SUMMARY  
-----

1. (C) THE GOV'S "MISSION IDENTIDAD" (MISSION IDENTITY) IS PROVIDING CEDULAS (IDENTITY CARDS) TO MASSIVE NUMBERS OF UNDOCUMENTED VENEZUELAN AND FOREIGNERS. THE GOV IS WORKING BUSILY VIA THE MISSION TO ISSUE IDENTITY CARDS TO POTENTIAL VOTERS BEFORE THE JULY 10 ELECTORAL REGISTRY DEADLINE FOR THE AUGUST 15 REFERENDUM. WHILE THESE EFFORTS PURPORT TO CORRECT AN HISTORIC INJUSTICE OF DENYING IDENTITY DOCUMENTS (AND, THUS, THE RIGHT TO VOTE) TO THE POOR, THE TRUE PURPOSE OF THE CAMPAIGN IS TO REGISTER AS MANY VOTERS AS POSSIBLE FROM VENEZUELA'S LOWER CLASS, WHICH IS DECIDEDLY PRO-CHAVEZ. THE MISSION USES MILITARY BASES, MOBILE CEDULA UNITS, AND CUBAN-TRAINED "SOCIAL WORKERS" TO PROVIDE THE CEDULAS AND REGISTER THE VOTERS SIMULTANEOUSLY. END SUMMARY.

-----  
MISSION IDENTITY - OIL MONEY AND CUBAN TRAINING  
-----

2. (C) THE GOV LAUNCHED "MISSION IDENTITY" IN EARLY 2004 WITH A GOAL OF PROVIDING CEDULAS (NATIONAL IDENTITY CARDS) TO SIX MILLION CITIZENS, PARTICULARLY POOR VENEZUELAN, WHO HAVE HISTORICALLY HAD DIFFICULTY OBTAINING IDENTITY DOCUMENTS. STATE-RUN OIL COMPANY PDVSA PROVIDED TRUCKS FOR MOBILE UNITS, A PROGRAM DUBBED "CEDULA EXPRESS." THE GOV IS USING AS MANY AS 100 OF THESE MOBILE UNITS, AS WELL AS MILITARY BASES AROUND THE COUNTRY AS OUTPOSTS FOR CEDULA DISTRIBUTION. DANIEL CORTEZ, A FORMER GOV SUPERVISOR OF IDENTITY CARD OFFICIALS WHO NOW WORKS WITH THE COORDINADORA DEMOCRATICA, TOLD POLOFF ON JUNE 29 THAT 800 CUBAN-TRAINED FRANCISCO DE MIRANDA FRONT (FFM) "SOCIAL WORKERS" AND VENEZUELAN ARMY PERSONNEL RUN MISSION IDENTITY, RATHER THAN THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR AND JUSTICE'S DIRECTORATE FOR IMMIGRATION (DIEX). LAPTOPS AND ON-SITE CARD MAKERS CREATE A QUICK SYSTEM OF DISTRIBUTION, ALLOWING VENEZUELAN TO OBTAIN A CEDULA IN LESS THAN 20 MINUTES. DIEX DIRECTOR GENERAL CABEZAS TOLD REPORTERS IN JUNE THAT TWO MILLION PEOPLE HAVE RECEIVED CEDULAS SINCE THE NEW AUTOMATED SYSTEM STARTED IN OCTOBER 2003. CORTEZ CONFIRMED THIS ESTIMATE TO POLOFF, BUT CAUTIONED THAT A LARGE PERCENTAGE OF THE NEW CEDULAS ARE MERELY REPLACEMENTS FOR OLD CEDULAS.

-----  
PAPER-THIN SECURITY  
-----

3. (C) RINCON ASSERTS THAT THE NEW VENEZUELAN CEDULAS ARE SOME OF THE MOST SECURE IDENTITY CARDS IN THE WORLD. THE FINGER PRINT, SECURITY PAPER, AND LAMINATION GIVE THE CEDULAS "AN ABSOLUTE GUARANTEE OF SECURITY," RINCON TOLD REPORTERS. DISPLAYING BOTH NEW AND OLD CEDULAS, CORTEZ POINTED OUT HOW SECURITY FEATURES HAVE DIMINISHED IN THE NEW CEDULA. BEYOND THE PHYSICAL SECURITY FEATURES, THE CEDULAS ARE NOT RELIABLE BECAUSE OF THE DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM. VENEZUELAN OR FOREIGNER, LITTLE DOCUMENTATION IS NEEDED AT THE MOBILE UNITS TO SECURE A CEDULA, SAID CORTEZ, WHO REPORTED THAT HE REPLACED HIS OWN CEDULA SIMPLY BY TELLING THE OFFICIAL HIS IDENTITY NUMBER. OPPOSITION GROUPS CLAIM THAT THE GOV IS GIVING CEDULAS TO FOREIGNERS WITHOUT DOCUMENTATION IN ATTEMPT TO ADD MORE CHAVEZ SUPPORTERS TO THE VOTING REGISTRY. CAUSA R, A LEFT-WING OPPOSITION PARTY, HAS ACCUSED THE GOV OF ILLEGALLY NATURALIZING "THOUSANDS OF FOREIGNERS AND THOUSANDS OF CRIMINALS TO FILL THE VOTING REGISTRY." IN ADDITION, WE HAVE HEARD REPORTS THAT THE GOV IS USING A LIST OF THE PEOPLE WHO SIGNED THE REAFIRMAZO (THE PETITIONS TO RECALL PRESIDENT HUGO CHAVEZ) TO DENY CEDULAS AND, THUS, DISCRIMINATE AGAINST CHAVEZ OPPONENTS. ONE PRESS STORY SHOWED TWO PEOPLE WHO SIGNED WHO WERE DENIED CEDULAS AT A MOBILE SITE. THEY WERE TOLD THEY WOULD HAVE TO APPLY DIRECTLY WITH DIEX, A PROCESS

THAT CAN TAKE MONTHS.

CARACAS 00002153 002 OF 002

-----  
14. (C) PART OF THE CAMPAIGN TO REGISTER MORE VOTERS INCLUDES THE NATURALIZATION OF FOREIGNERS. CORTEZ, WHO LEFT HIS DIX POST IN JANUARY, TOLD POLOFF THAT 16,000 FOREIGNERS WERE NATURALIZED IN MARCH. IN JUNE, THE GOV NATURALIZED 105,000 FOREIGNERS WITHIN ONE WEEK, PART OF ITS GOAL TO NATURALIZE 200,000 BEFORE JULY 10. (NOTE: THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF NATURALIZATIONS PER YEAR PREVIOUSLY HAD BEEN 3,000 TO 4,000. END NOTE.) THE NATURALIZED CITIZENS WILL RECEIVE CEDULAS AND BE REGISTERED TO VOTE IMMEDIATELY. PART OF THE GOV REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN, THE NATURALIZATION EVENTS HAVE A CLEAR POLITICAL BENT. AT A NATURALIZATION CEREMONY ON JUNE 25, VICE PRESIDENT JOSE VICENTE RANGEL ASKED THE NEWLY NATURALIZED CITIZENS HOW THEY WOULD VOTE IN THE AUGUST 15 REFERENDUM. AFTER EXHORTING EVERYONE TO VOTE "NO," HE PROCLAIMED, "THERE IS NOT ONE VOTE FOR 'YES' (TO REVOKE CHAVEZ)."

-----  
REFERENDUM IMPLICATIONS  
-----

15. (C) THE CNE ESTIMATES THAT THERE ARE OVER THREE MILLION VENEZUELANES WHO ARE NOT REGISTERED TO VOTE. MISSION IDENTITY PERSONNEL, AFTER ISSUING CEDULAS, ALSO FILL OUT CNE VOTER APPLICATIONS FOR THE RECIPIENTS. CORTEZ ESTIMATED THAT GOV EFFORTS COULD INCREASE THE VOTER REGISTRATION POOL FROM 12 MILLION TO 14 MILLION PEOPLE FOR THE AUGUST 15 REFERENDUM. MVR DEPUTY JUAN BARRETO TOLD POLOFF THAT VOTER REGISTRATION AND MOBILIZATION OF LOWER CLASS VENEZUELANES IS A PRINCIPAL PART OF THE GOV REFERENDUM STRATEGY (SEE REFTTEL). BARRETO SAID BARRIO ADENTRO (THE GOV MISSION TO PLACE CUBAN DOCTORS IN POOR NEIGHBORHOODS) DOCTORS ARE IDENTIFYING PATIENTS WITHOUT CEDULAS AND FFM "SOCIAL WORKERS" ARE THEN HELPING THE PATIENTS ACQUIRE CEDULAS. THE GOV IS ALSO RUNNING MULTI-PAGE ADVERTISEMENTS IN STATE-RUN NEWSPAPERS TO ENCOURAGE VOTER REGISTRATION AND PUBLICIZE THE 600 VOTER REGISTRATION CENTERS OPERATED BY THE CNE. CARACAS DAILY TAL CUAL REPORTED JUNE 29, HOWEVER, THAT ONLY 246,938 NEW NAMES HAD BEEN REGISTERED IN THE ELECTORAL REGISTRY IN APRIL AND MAY, SUGGESTING THE CHAVISTAS ARE RUNNING SHORT OF THEIR GOAL.

-----  
COMMENT  
-----

16. (C) HAVING AN IDENTITY DOCUMENT IS A MAJOR BOOST FOR FACILITATING THE DAILY LIFE OF VENEZUELANES. MANY OF THE COLOMBIANS RECEIVING CEDULAS HAVE LIVED IN VENEZUELA FOR YEARS, EVEN DECADES, AND SHOULD HAVE RECEIVED CEDULAS LONG AGO. THERE ARE LEGITIMATE REASONS TO BELIEVE THAT A CEDULA CAMPAIGN BEFORE AN ELECTORAL EVENT IS VALID, BUT THE GOV IS UNABASHEDLY LINKING CEDULAS TO VOTES FOR CHAVEZ. IT IS HARD FOR THE OPPOSITION TO DENOUNCE THE PROGRAM AT THE RISK OF APPEARING TO OPPOSE POOR PEOPLE HAVING IDENTITY CARDS. WE DO NOT BELIEVE CHAVEZ WILL WIN THE REFERENDUM WITH THIS PLAN ALONE. AS THE FIRMAZO DEMONSTRATED, MANY POOR PEOPLE ARE CAPABLE OF RECEIVING BENEFITS FROM THE GOV ON THE ONE HAND, AND STILL EXPRESS THEMSELVES AGAINST THE GOV. HOWEVER, GIVEN THE POOR'S TENDENCY TO SUPPORT CHAVEZ, THE "CEDULA EXPRESS" PROGRAM COULD MEAN NUMEROUS ADDITIONAL NUMBERS OF VOTES FOR CHAVEZ ON AUGUST 15.  
SHAPIRO

NNNN

2004CARACA02153 - CONFIDENTIAL